



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
REGION 4  
ATLANTA FEDERAL CENTER  
61 FORSYTH STREET  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-8960

November 9, 2012

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District  
Planning and Environmental Division  
P.O. Box 2288  
Mobile, AL 36628-0001

Attention: Mr. Philip A. Hegji

**Subject: EPA Comments on the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Proposed Widening of the Pascagoula Lower Sound/Bayou Casotte Channel, Pascagoula, Jackson County, MS; CEQ #: 20120317; ERP #: COE-E35087-MS.**

Dear Mr. Hegji:

Pursuant to Section 309 of the Clean Air and Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), EPA, Region 4 has reviewed the subject document. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) project evaluates the consequences of the Jackson County Port Authorities proposal to widen the Pascagoula Lower Sound/Bayou Casotte Channel segment from the Federally authorized width of 350 feet and depth of -42 feet mean lower low water (MLLW) (with 2 ft of allowable over-depth and 2 feet of advanced maintenance) to a width of 450 feet, parallel to the existing channel centerline and to the existing authorized depth of -42 feet MLL. The project also involves the limited widening of the northern portion of the Horn Island Pass channel in the Port of Pascagoula.

The primary purpose and need for the proposed widening is to alleviate current vessel restrictions and increase travel efficiencies for marine vessel moving into and out of Pascagoula and Bayou Casotte Harbor. According to the EIS, "economic pressure and technological advances have generally resulted in a trend towards the production of larger ships, which has increased channel improvement needs." Specific benefits anticipated include transit during dark hours for crude oil tankers (in ballast) and Panmax bulk carriers. Other benefits include "transit of liquefied natural gas tankers during high wind and current condition, two-way traffic under established conditions and improved terminal operations and increased productions hours due to decreased number of delays."

Enlarging the Harbor requires dredging approximately 7.2 miles of the channel. The preferred alternative involves dredging adjacent to the existing Pascagoula Lower Sound/Bayou Cassotte Federal Channel segment to widen the channel 100 feet on the west side to the existing depth of -42 feet MLLW (with authorized advanced maintenance and allowable over depth excavation consistent with the Federal project) as opposed to widening the channel 50 feet on either side of the existing Channel segment. This alternative was selected because it alleviates more of the existing vessel transit restrictions (e.g., eases turns).

Disposal of approximately 3.4 million cubic yards of dredge material will result from the channel modifications including the placement of approximately 3.7% (125,000 mcy) in the designated littoral zone area for beneficial use and the rest of the material (approx. 3.3 mcy) in the Pascagoula Ocean Dredged Material Disposal Site (ODMDS). Both action alternatives will include similar amounts of new dredge volume dredging. However the preferred alternative will result in a smaller amount of material being used for beneficial reuse. The disposal options for the dredged material involve placement in the Pascagoula ODMDS and the designated Littoral Zone Area (LZA) east and south of Horn Island. Approximately 26.9 square miles of the Pascagoula ODMDS is available for dredged material placement. Based on the information provided in the FEIS, EPA notes that the ODMDS has the capacity to accommodate the dredge material from the proposed project.

The EPA supports the development of beneficial uses of dredged material and commends the USACE on the beneficial reuse of some of the proposed dredged material for the designated LZA. Nevertheless, we recommend that the USACE continue to look for opportunities to increase the beneficial use of the remaining material, to the extent practicable. The EPA also recommends that the air quality section should be updated to reflect the recent designations for ground-level ozone. A final rule that directs key aspects of the implementation of the 2008 National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ground-level ozone was issued by EPA on April 30, 2012. The EPA set those final standards at 0.075 ppm on March 12, 2008. On May 21, 2012, EPA finalized the 2008 ozone NAAQS, with an effective date of July 20, 2012 (77 FR 30088). The rule established initial air quality designations and classifications for the 2008 ozone NAAQS for most areas in the United States, including area of Indian country. The Gulfport-Biloxi-Pascagoula combined statistical area was designated unclassifiable or attainment, therefore a General Conformity Determination is not required.

<http://www.epa.gov/airquality/ozonepollution/designations/2008standards/regs.htm>

In an effort to avoid and minimize future air quality impacts, EPA recommends the use of electric-powered dredging equipment and encourages its use as part of the proposed project to the fullest extent practicable. Using electric-powered dredging equipment is an effective tool in reducing NO<sub>x</sub> and particulate emissions. We also recommend that the contractors should be required to use low-NO<sub>x</sub> engines, alternative fuels, electrification, particulate traps, and other advanced technology, whenever feasible. Commitment to use emission reducing equipment should be included the Record of Decision.

We appreciate your coordination with us. The EPA technical contacts will be Doug Johnson (404/562-9386) located in our Water Management Division, while our NEPA contact will be Ntale Kajumba (404/562-9620) of my staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ntale Kajumba" followed by a horizontal flourish.

*For* Heinz J. Mueller, Chief  
NEPA Program Office  
Office of Policy and Management